



**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
**Washington, DC 20423**

EO - 300

*Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration*

February 3, 2006

Kathryn Kusske Floyd, Esq.  
Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw LLP  
1909 K Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006

RE: STB Finance Docket No. 34658, Northern Rail Extension Project

Dear Ms. Floyd:

Consistent with 40 CFR 1506.5(a), we would like to request information needed for Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the proposed Northern Rail Extension (NRE) Project being conducted by the Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA). During the scoping process for the EIS, several questions or suggestions were made about the feasibility of various alignments and features. In order to respond to these comments and suggestions, we are requesting information on the feasibility or infeasibility of various potential new alignments and features, as follows:

1. In the area of the northern alignments (designated as N1a, N2a and N3 in the November, 2005 Preliminary Alignments Map Set), what is the feasibility of a new alignment closer and parallel to Eielson Air Force Base (AFB), on either the east or west side of the Richardson Highway, to avoid Pile Driver Slough and private property in the Eielson farm district? Would the feasibility of this potential alignment be affected by Eielson AFB land holdings or Air Force activities?
2. For alignment N1a, what is the feasibility of an alternative crossing of the Tanana River downstream (north) of the current N1a crossing, either downstream or upstream of the floodway? Would the feasibility of this potential crossing be affected by the need to use land in the Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA) for the rail line, and if so, why (e.g., would rail line activity in the TFTA be acceptable to the military)?
3. For alignments N2 and N3, what is the feasibility of providing culverts or other measures to accommodate existing dog sled trails?
4. For alignments N2 and N3, what is the feasibility of making further adjustments to these routes to avoid or minimize the need to take private property, or to avoid or minimize the need to bisect private property parcels?

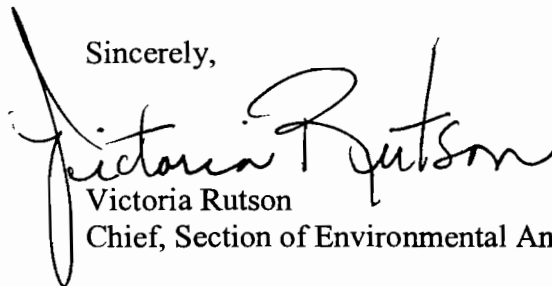
5. For alignment N2b, what is the feasibility of adjusting this alignment so that it “hugs” the Tanana River with the objective to avoid private property?
6. What is the feasibility of a new alignment roughly parallel to the Richardson Highway on the east side of the Tanana and Delta rivers to reach Delta Junction, recognizing that such an alignment would need to have a spur that bridges the Tanana River to meet the purpose and need?
7. For alignment S1b, what is the feasibility of providing rail access to the Whitestone Farm Community (recognizing that the method of financing a potential spur is not known and that ARRC’s preliminary plans do not currently propose a spur as a component of the NRE Project)? If a spur appears feasible, please provide information on the approximate location.
8. For alignments S1c and S2c, what considerations are being made concerning historical flooding in the Delta Junction area and what actions may be needed to address potential future flooding?

In addition, we are requesting information on the need for and location of:

- For any/all alignments, spurs to reach other potential shippers (recognizing that the method of financing potential spurs is not known and that ARRC’s preliminary plans do not currently propose any spurs as components of the NRE Project, with the exception of a potential spur to the Blair Lakes area).
- For any/all alignments, work camps, staging areas and material sources to be used during construction.

Thank you for your assistance. In addition to Dave Navecky of my staff, please provide a copy of your response to Mr. Alan Summerville of ICF Consulting, our independent third-party contractor at 9300 Lee Highway, Fairfax, Virginia, 22031. Please feel free to contact me or Dave Navecky at 202-565-1593 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and "R".

Victoria Rutson  
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis